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The Search for Sarah E. Stafford Collier's Ancestry, A CHF Success Story

MAY 7, 2016 9:38 AM \ [3 COMMENTS](#) \ [BY COLLIERHERITAGE](#) \ [EDIT](#)

The CHF website sometimes generates private comments and inquiries that aren't always immediately made public. Once such inquiry lead to re-attaching two ends of a long-broken thread of lineage. It is one of the success stories of the genealogical effort by CHF.

Sarah E. Stafford was the widow of Robert Thomas Collier (son of Robert Marshall Collier and Amanda Fletcher Green), who died as a soldier of the Confederacy in Savannah (see March 18, 2016 post, "Robert T. Collier . . . But Not This One"). The two were married on May 6, 1856 in Upson County. They had two children, Martha Aldora, born about 1859 and Robert Thomas (II) born in July 1862. On May 7, 1862, Robert Thomas (I) enlisted in the 32nd Infantry Regiment Georgia Volunteers Company I. He left home before the birth of his son and died without ever seeing him, on or about June 29, 1862. You can imagine the difficulties faced by this young, widowed mother during the war when almost complete devastation was inflicted on much of Georgia. In 1869, Sarah married James Robert Jordan.

I was contacted by Tom Brigman, whose wife was the great, great granddaughter of Sarah. Her great grandfather was Robert Thomas II, whose father died before he was born. Tom and his wife had no knowledge of Sarah's line before her marriage to Robert Thomas Collier. Their primary question had to do with the actual date of death of Robert Thomas in Savannah. CHF was able to provide Tom and his wife limited evidence of the date of death and also photo copies of a page from the Bible of Robert Marshall Collier. The page from the Bible documents the birth of Robert Thomas. These were exciting discoveries for Tom and his wife.

But Sarah's background was a mystery. The Staffords were known as a prominent family in Upson and Pike counties in Georgia in the 1800s and early 1900s. Old records showed several Stafford businesses in the Barnesville area, some of which were linked to the enterprises of J. C. Collier. Still there was nothing known about Sarah and nothing to tie her to any of the known Staffords.

Then CHF found this in a a 90-year old letter written in 1925 by J. C. Collier to kin in Texas.

recall them. My Father's oldest brother, Thomas Collier, married a niece of Alvis Stafford, her name was Sarah Stafford. Unfortunately he was killed during the Civil War between the States.

Since Sarah was a Stafford when she married Robert Thomas Collier, then she was the daughter of one of Alvis' brothers and not a sister. The ends of the threads were coming closer!! The information was relayed to Tom, who was able to tie it all together.

Here is Tom Brigman's resulting article on Sarah Stafford and the Stafford-Collier connection.

The Stafford Connection

Maryland was the first ancestral home of the Staffords in America. Anderton Stafford was born in Maryland about 1788, moved to Greensboro, Guilford County, NC, where he resided from before 1810 to after 1820. Sometime in the early 1820's, Anderton, his wife, Henrietta Weatherly, and their children moved to Upson County Georgia.

Following were the children of Anderton and Henrietta Stafford. Ellis Stafford was born about 1810 in North Carolina, married Ann Lovejoy on 25 Feb 1841, lived in Coweta County, Georgia, the last 40 years of his life and died 17 Apr 1869. *Alvis* Stafford was born 13 June 1811 in North Carolina, married Fannie Rogers Gardner, lived in Barnesville, Georgia. James H. Stafford was born in 1813 in North Carolina, married Caroline Simmons on 20 Dec 1836 in Pike County Georgia, resided most of his life in Upson County, and died 14 Feb 1888 in Newton County Georgia. Daughter Minerva Stafford was born 1817 in North Carolina, married William Jasper Willis on 26 Mar 1835 in Upson County Georgia, and lived most her life in Upson County where she died on 11 Aug 1855. Anderson Wright Stafford was born 5 Sept 1818 in North Carolina, married Sarah V. Sturdivant on 26 Oct 1848 in Upson County, Georgia, resided in Upson, Monroe, and Pike counties. Anderson W. died 1 Apr 1885 in Upson County Georgia.

James H. Stafford and Caroline Simmons had five daughters, Sarah E., Mary Lou, Melissa A., Fredonia, and Henrietta Stafford. James was a farmer, and a Methodist minister, spending most of life in Upson County. After Caroline died in 1853, he married Martha Slaughter Moreland around 1854, and they had 4 sons. The family moved to Newton County after 1870 to educate their sons at Emory in Oxford, Newton County, Georgia.

The children of Alvis and Fannie Stafford were John Warren Stafford, born Feb 20, 1838, who married Sarah Ann Blalock on Dec 8, 1859; James Alvis Stafford, born Jan 14, 1848, married (1) Mary Ellen Reeves in 1867, and (2) Alice Reeves on 21 Nov 1882; Henrietta Frances Stafford, born Jun 6, 1846, married Andrew Jackson Blalock; and Mary Emma Stafford, born Oct 29, 1840, married Marcellus F. Cochran.

The children of John Warren and Sarah Stafford were William Capers Stafford born Sept 18, 1860 married Mrs. Ruby Blount Jan 3, 1894; Reubin Alvis Stafford, born Jan. 1862, married Lutie Tyler Jan 2, 1889; Frank Marcellus Stafford, born May 5, 1868; and Mary Emma Stafford, born Jan 10, 1870, married Rev Henry Stiles Bradley Nov 1, 1893.

James Alvis Stafford, a prominent merchant in Barnesville, devoted most of his time to agriculture and fruit growing. He had large landed interest in Upson, near The Rock, and Pike Counties. The children of James Alvis and Mary Ellen Stafford were Frank Alvis Stafford born 25 Mar 1868, died 2 Oct 1923; and Sarah Blanton (Blannie) Stafford born 2 Mar 1873, died 18 Jun 1894. Mary Ellen Reeves Stafford died 16 Sept 1880. The children of James Alvis Stafford and Alice C. Reeves, (born 5 July 1864, died 27 Apr 1938) were Sam Stafford and Mary Ellen Stafford. James Alvis Stafford died 4 April 1915.

In 1850 Alvis Stafford and his partner John Gardner opened a new mercantile business in Barnesville, Georgia called The Stafford Store (located at the intersection of Market & Main Street). Alvis Stafford's oldest son, James Warren Stafford began working at the Stafford Store at the age of 17; he left and enlisted in the Army of the CSA at the age of 22. James Warren returned to Stafford Store after the War Between the States was joined by Andrew Jackson Blalock (his brother in law) and the business became Stafford, Blalock & Co. which last until 1885, when the company failed. The store reformed as J. W. Stafford and Sons. The new company included Alvis Stafford, John Warren Stafford, and John Warren's sons, Reuben Alvis, William Caper, and Frank Marcellus. Frank Stafford besides being a junior partner in J W Stafford & Sons, also served on the 1st Board of Directors of the First National Bank of Barnesville, chartered in 1902. Frank Stafford continued as a board member until his early death at the age of 41 in 1909.

The Stafford Family became part of the historical, cultural, and religious fabric of Barnesville, Georgia. They owned and operated a successful business which became the focal point for the boundary of the new incorporated city of Barnesville (1852), first being the center of a circle ½ mile from the store and later 1 and 1/2 miles from the store. They participated in government as aldermen (J. A. Stafford 1889 -1890, W. C. Stafford 1883, R. A. Stafford 1891-1892, and J. W. Stafford 1892-1893) and Mayor. Alvis Stafford was elected mayor in December 1877, and John Warren Stafford served as mayor (1887 -1888). The family was part of education efforts in Barnesville helping to establish the first Male & Female high school (Alvis Stafford was a Trustee) and later in establishing Gordon Institute, and participating on the board of Gordon Institute from 1872 to 1926. Many of the Stafford children graduated from Gordon Institute. In March 1906, J W Stafford gifted the city four acres of woodland for a park which was bordered by a street named for the family (Stafford Avenue). The Staffords were also part of the establishment of the Barnesville Methodist Church. Both R. A. Stafford and Alvis Stafford were on the Board of Stewarts and Sarah (Miss Sallie) Stafford was superintendent of the Methodist Sunday School for many years. The Staffords were also active in various cultural clubs and organizations in Barnesville including the Masons.

My wife's great, great grandmother was Sarah E. Stafford born near Salem, Upson County Georgia on 15 Nov 1837. Her parents were Rev. James H. Stafford (1813-1879) born in North Carolina and Caroline Simmons (1819 - 1853). Sarah was the oldest of 5 girls. She met, and later married Robert Thomas Collier (son of Robert Marshall Collier and Amanda Fletcher Green) on May 6, 1856. They made their home near Zebulon, Pike County Georgia. To this couple were born two children, Martha Aldora about 1859 and Robert Thomas (II) in July 1862. However, their lives on the farm in Pike County were interrupted as were many during this time by the War Between the States. Robert like many of his peers enlisted in the Army of the Confederate States of America (32nd Infantry Regiment Georgia Volunteers Company I) and went off to war. Robert never met his son because he enlisted on 7 May 1862 and died of measles in Savannah on or about Jun 29, 1862. Robert (II) was born 24 July 1862. Sarah struggled with her two young children. On 21 Feb 1869 she married James Robert Jordan, a Confederate Veteran. In the 1870

Federal Census Martha & Robert Collier were part of the Jordan Family. In 1880, only Robert Collier remained with his mother and step-father. However, Robert Collier had two half sibling, James Alvis Jordan and Lilly Jordan. In the 1900 Federal Census, Sarah and James Jordan were living with Sarah's sister, Mary Lou Snipes, who was listed as a widow. They continued living with Mary Lou until Sarah's death on 15 March 1910.

Thus we have the Stafford connection to the Collier Family.

Thank you to Glen Collier for his hints about Sarah Stafford, which lead me to discovering the Stafford Family, and the encouragement to write this article.

Thomas O. Brigman March 2016

Tom transcribed the following from the Thomas Virden Family Bible. According to Tom, *"The Bible lists and links Robert Thomas Collier (II), Robert T. and Sarah Stafford Collier's son, by marriage to Mattie Camilla Virden. It also gives the names and important date for their children: Aldora, Dovil, Ollie, Robert, and William. Ollie Collier married Lyra Sallas and their only child, Mary Evelyn Collier,*

THOMAS G. VIRDEN BIBLE

CERTIFICATE OF HOLY MATRIMONY

Thomas G. Virden of Upson County Georgia and Zilpha A. Brown of Pike County Georgia

On this 27 of January 1853 at the residence of the bride's father by James B. Henson of Barnesville, Georgia *

Witness: by many

Witness: by many friends

MARRIAGES

- A. A. A. Simmons and Mary Emma Virden, our beloved daughter, were joined in Holy Bond of Wedlock by Rev. J Jackson, Nov 26, 1878.*
- B. Robert T. Collier and Mattie Camilla Virden were married Dec 12th 1883 by the Rev. James Henson in Barnesville, Ga.**
- C. Dovel Glenn Collier and Samuel L. Baldwin were married Dec 12th 1914 by the Rev. W. N. Aiusworth in Macon, Ga
- D. Ollie Odamas (Otamus) Collier and Lyra Syllas (Sallas) were married May 7th 1916 by the Rev. W. L. Jones in Macon, Ga.
- E. Robert Lee Collier and Lillie Virginia Wilcoxson (Wilcoxson) were married May 19th 1916 by the Rev. W. L. Jones in Macon, Ga

BIRTHS

- A. Thomas G. Virden was born the 4 of October 1831 *
- B. Zilpha A. N. Virden was born 8 of October 1835*
- C. John Thomas Virden was born 23 of November 1854*
- D. William Arrelious Virden was born 22 January 1857*
- E. Mary Emma Virden was born the 30 of September 1858*
- F. Mattie Cammillia (Camilla) Elizabeth Virden was born the 12 of September 1862*
- G. Charley Edwin Virden was born the 15 of November 1869*
- H. Emma Aldora Collier born to R. T. & M. C. Collier Oct 16th 1884 **
- I. Dovel Glenn Collier born to R. T. & M. C. Collier July 2, 1887
- J. Ollie Otimas (Otamus) Collier born to R. T. & M. C. Collier Sept 23, 1891
- K. Robert Lee Collier born to R. T. & M. C. Collier May 5th 1895
- L. William Virden Collier born to R. T. & M. C. Collier May 25th 1898
- M. Mary Evelyn Collier born to Ollie O & Lyra S. Collier Dec 2, 1923**
- N. Richard Lee Collier born to Robert L. & Marie Collier on April 24, 1937**

DEATHS

- A. William Arrelious Virden departed this life Oct 20th in the year of our Lord 1857*
- B. Thomas G. Virden departed this life June 13th 1903 age 71 years, 8 months, and 5 days. He died in great peace in the Lord. **
- C. Emma Aldora Collier died Oct 9th 1890**
- D. Robert Thomas Collier died Feb 1st 1910
- E. Zilphia Ann Virden died Oct 12th 1916
- F. Mattie C. Collier died Nov 5th 1924**
- G. William V. Collier died Oct 16th 1939

MEMORANDA

Myrtric Simmons, our first grandchild, was born July 15, 1881

(*) Original Handwriting (**) Handwriting Change

Pictorial Family Bible

Published by The National Publishing Co. (Philadelphia, PA: Chicago, Ill: St. Louis, Mo: Atlanta, Ga)
©1879

Transcribed by Thomas O. Brigman, March 2016

Finally, here is the obituary for Sarah E. Jordan (formerly Stafford and then Collier). The newspaper clipping was found in the Thomas Virden Bible. The date and source are unknown.

JORDAN.—Mrs. Sara E. Jordan (nee Stafford) was born November 15, 1837, in Upson county, Ga. On Wednesday afternoon, at 4 o'clock, March 16, 1910, she peacefully fell asleep in Jesus and went to live with the redeemed in heaven. She was the daughter of Rev. James H. Stafford. Environed with the influences of a distinctively Christian home, she gave her heart to God in very early life, and joined the Methodist Church, South, at Salem, near the place of her birth.

She was twice married, first to Robert T. Collier, on May 6, 1856. To this union two children were born, a daughter and a son. On February 21, 1869, she was married the second time to James R. Jordan. Two children, a son and a daughter, were born to this union. All the children, save one, a son, preceded the good mother to the better world.

Sister Jordan's Christian profession was most consistent and exemplary. Her devotion to the Church, and strong Christian character were exceedingly beautiful. She enjoyed the rich and deep experience of God's kingdom. Her growth

Our many thanks to Tom Brigman for allowing CHF to post this information.

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and enlargement in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ was constant and regular. A little more than seventy-two years she walked with God. When the

3 Thoughts on “The Search for Sarah E. Stafford Collier’s Ancestry, A CHF Success Story”



[Jan Rhodes](#)

on [May 7, 2016 at 10:10 am](#) said:

[Edit](#)

How good to hear those spiritual pieces of the story.

[Reply↓](#)



[Carol Collier Ballard](#)

on [May 8, 2016 at 12:11 am](#) said:

[Edit](#)

I loved the obituary for Sara! Nothing could be said any better of someone but that they walked with the Lord!

[Reply↓](#)



[Elaine](#)

on [May 9, 2016 at 5:15 pm](#) said:

[Edit](#)

Wonderful to reunite the family members back in time. I am very glad to know about these cousins. Great story and heartwarming. Cousin Elaine Collier Neal

[Reply↓](#)

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